DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 280 903 UD 025 400

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TITLE Education and Job Training Needs of Hispanic Students.
INSTITUTION California State Univ., San Bernardino. School of Education.
PUB DATE [86]
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Acculturation; Career Education; *Counselor Attitudes; Educational Needs; High Schools; *High School Students; *Hispanic Americans; Peer Influence; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS California

ABSTRACT

A study explored the perceptions of counselors regarding educational and vocational needs of Hispanic students experiencing problems in high school. A sample of 25 secondary school counselors in the San Bernardino-Riverside area of California were interviewed. The counselors most frequently cited these causes for the problems Hispanic students may face: (1) peer pressure; (2) language/learning deficiencies; (3) culture differences; (4) gangs; (5) different social/dating norms; (6) low self-concept; (7) drugs; (8) academic problems; and (9) poor study habits and skills. Nineteen (75 percent) of the counselors ranked peer pressure as the primary reason and almost 100 percent ranked language differences and poor study skills as the secondary reason. Also asked about Hispanic self-concept, the counselors stated that Hispanic students may experience identity confusion due to a lack of positive role models and culture conflicts stemming from differences between the culture at home and the culture at school. Most of the counselors did not feel that Anglo educators understand Hispanic culture, and most believed that both Anglo and Hispanic faculty need training in how to effectively teach and counsel Hispanic students. All of the counselors advocated the development of teaching strategies in middle schools to prepare students for a good transition to high school as well as increased counseling, occupational exploration, and career education for Hispanic students. (KH)

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Education and Job Training Needs of Hispanic Students

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a study which explored the perceptions of counselors regarding educational and vocational needs of Hispanic students experiencing problems in high school. Strategies are presented which may enable students to achieve in school and work.

Teachers and school counselors throughout the United States can anticipate working with many more students of Hispanic origin in the near future. The difficult economic and social conditions in Mexico and other Latin American countries have increasingly stimulated more persons to emigrate. In fact, people of Hispanic origin now constitute the largest minority group in the United States; in 1980, the United States Census estimated the total Hispanic population at 14,608,673 persons (Kunce and Vales, 1984).

Many Hispanic students, especially those from recently immigrated families to the United States, experience difficulties in school. Teachers and counselors who have had little experience in providing education to culturally different populations can expect to have difficulties in classroom and counseling settings because of teacher-student and counselor-student misunderstandings (Axelson, 1985; Kunce and Vales, 1984). This paper presents the findings of a 1986 study which explored education and job training needs of Hispanic high school students who were experiencing academic problems in high schools in the San Bernardino-Riverside, California area.

When discussing the needs of any ethnic group, it is important to recognize that diversity will exist

among that group of people. Diversity exists among people of Hispanic origin in southern California. The range varies from successful business and educational professionals to non-English speaking immigrants who have recently come to the United States across the Mexican border or from a Central American country. Two terms that are often used interchangeably in education literature are race and ethnicity. As it pertains to the human group, (Krogman, 1945) defines race as "...a subgroup of peoples possessing a definite combination of physical characters, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the subgroup from other subgroups of mankind." Physical differences involving skin pigmentation, head form, facial features, and stature are among the most commonly recognized factors distinguishing races of people. Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to a group classification in which the members share a unique social and cultural heritage passed on from one generation to the next (Rose, 1964). Ethnicity is often erroneously assumed to have a biological foundation. Ethnic differences in language, customs, religion, other cultural factors, and racial factors may or may not be germane to ethnic differences. It is important to realize the difference between race and

ethnicity when talking about a subject as presented in this paper mainly from the point of view that many ethnic characteristics are learned characteristics. Likewise, it is important to realize the diversity among any ethnic group.

Method--In January, 1986, a study was conducted with 25 secondary school counselors in the San Bernardino-Riverside area, two large communities in southern California with a combined population of approximately 450,000 people. The research was conducted as a pilot study for a larger research project to be conducted in 1987 at California State University-San Bernardino. The counselors were asked to complete a structured interview one hour in duration. The counselors were asked about their perceptions of the educational and vocational needs and problems of Hispanic students experiencing academic difficulties in their respective high schools. Sixteen of the counselors were of Hispanic origin while nine counselors were of Anglo origin. All 25 persons participating in this study were counselors in large, urban high schools.

Findings--The 25 counselors were asked to rank two problems they believed Hispanic students having academic problems in school experience during their high school years. Nineteen (75%) of the counselors

ranked peer pressure as their primary choice. These counselors stated peer pressure often influences students to participate in gang related activities or become gang members. Secondly, 24 (96%) of the counselors ranked the second major problem of Hispanic students as academic learning problems stemming from language differences and poor study skills.

Counselors were also asked about Hispanic students' self-concept. Nineteen (75%) of the counselors stated Hispanic students may experience identity confusion due to a lack of positive role models and culture conflicts stemming from their dual participation in their Hispanic culture at home and interaction in a school environment which often stresses Anglo standards and values. The conclusive list of the counselors' perceptions of problems which Hispanic students may face in high school are as follows.

1. Peer pressure
2. Language/Learning deficiencies
3. Culture differences
4. Gangs
5. Different social/dating norms
6. Low self-concept
7. Drugs

8. Academic problems

9. Poor study habits and skills.

In addition, counselors were asked about the Hispanic students' needs in career education and counseling. Thirteen (50%) of the counselors stated Hispanic students take advantage of career education programs. However, 23 (92%) of the counselors did not believe most Hispanic students have their aptitudes identified or developed so that they may enter the career of their choice. Also 13 (50%) of the counselors stated Hispanic students have poor job seeking skills.

Findings from the study also indicated that 24 (94%) of the counselors did not feel that Anglo educators at their schools understand Hispanic culture. In addition, 24 counselors believed that both Anglo and Hispanic faculty in their schools need training in how to effectively teach and counsel Hispanic students.

In addition to citing needs and problems of academically low achieving Hispanic high school students, the counselors discussed strategies which may help students achieve academically and identify realistic occupational decisions. All of the counselors advocated the development of teaching strategies in middle schools to prepare students for a

good transition to high school. Likewise, all of the counselors believed that students need increased counseling, occupational exploration, and career education in order to set and reach their career goals. The counselors cited the following needs of Hispanic students which may be met by innovative educational strategies in order for the students to succeed in school and work:

1. Need counseling to improve self-esteem
2. Need curriculum which promotes multi-cultural awareness
3. Need identification of aptitudes
4. Need identification of vocational interests
5. Need tutorial programs in language and math areas
6. Need study skill training
7. Need job seeking skills training
8. Need counseling to become responsibly assertive

Discussion

This study explored educational and vocational needs of Hispanic students who have been experiencing difficulties in high school. With the growing presence of Hispanic people in the United States, educators should be concerned with these academic needs. Educational and counseling strategies can be incorporated into school programs in order for students to solve academic and personal problems and become job ready. The value of career exploration, guidance, and counseling, both in individual and group settings, must be recognized in order for Hispanic students to have positive self-concepts and be able to achieve their career goals in a multicultural society (Colangelo, Foxley, and Dustin, 1981; Atkinson, Morton, and Sue, 1983; Padilla, Ruiz, and Alvarez, 1975). Hispanic students have needs for occupational exploration, job preparation experiences, and job seeking skills training so that they can be successful in subsequent employment (Axelson, 1985). Current enrollment statistics for Hispanic college students indicate that there exists a disparity between their representation at the undergraduate level and their representation in the U.S. mainland. The representation of Hispanics in professional technical fields is also disproportionately

low. Counseling efforts that provide information to students on the numerous careers available in science, technology and skilled trades, and on the academic preparation necessary to pursue these careers, would ensure that students consider career alternatives from a well-informed perspective (Mestre and Robinson, 1983). Counselors and teachers should be aware of the needs and problems Hispanic students experience in high school and develop combined counseling-academic programs to meet the students' needs and improve their opportunities for career success.

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